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concl'd
- (i) said cellulose acetate compound has carboxyl groups wherein at least part of the carboxyl groups are free carboxyl groups;
 - (ii) said cellulose acetate compound contains at least one member selected from the group consisting of an acid having an acid dissociation exponent pKa of 1.93 to 4.50 in water, an alkali metal salt of said acid, and an alkaline earth metal salt of said acid; and
 - (iii) said cellulose acetate compound contains an alkali metal or an alkaline earth metal, wherein the total content of the alkali metal and the alkaline earth metal in 1 gram of the cellulose acetate is 5.5×10^{-6} equivalent or less in terms of ion equivalent,

wherein said cellulose acetate compound is soluble in an organic solvent.

G2 Sub H2

2. (thrice amended) A cellulose acetate compound according to Claim 1 having at least feature (iii), wherein the total content of the alkali metal and the alkaline earth metal in 1 gram of the cellulose acetate is 2.5×10^{-6} equivalent or less in terms of ion equivalent.

G3 Sub H2

3. (thrice amended) A cellulose acetate compound according to Claim 2, wherein the total content of the alkali metal and the alkaline earth metal in 1 gram of the cellulose acetate is 1×10^{-6} equivalent or less in terms of ion equivalent.

Sub H2
4. (thrice amended) A cellulose acetate compound according to Claim 1 having at least feature (ii), wherein the acid has a pKa value of 2.0 to 4.4.

5. (thrice amended) A cellulose acetate compound according to Claim 1 having at least feature (ii), wherein the acid of feature (ii) is at least one organic acid selected from the group consisting of an aliphatic monocarboxylic acid, an aliphatic polycarboxylic acid, a hydroxycarboxylic acid, and an amino acid.

6. (thrice amended) A cellulose acetate compound according to Claim 5, wherein the acid of feature (ii) is at least one organic acid selected from the group consisting of a saturated or unsaturated C₁₋₃ monocarboxylic acid, a saturated or unsaturated C₂₋₄ dicarboxylic acid, a C₁₋₆ hydroxycarboxylic acid, and an amino acid.

7. (thrice amended) A cellulose acetate compound according to Claim 6, wherein the acid of feature (ii) is at least one member selected from the group consisting of formic acid, haloacetic acid, halopropionic acid, acrylic acid, malonic acid, succinic acid, glutaric acid, fumaric acid, glycolic acid, lactic acid, malic acid, tartaric acid, and citric acid.

8. (thrice amended) A cellulose acetate compound according to Claim 1 having at least feature (ii), wherein the total content of the acid of feature (ii), the alkali metal salt of the acid, and the alkaline earth metal salt of the acid is 1×10^{-9} to 3×10^{-5} mole relative to 1 gram of the cellulose acetate.

9. (thrice amended) A cellulose acetate compound according to Claim 8, wherein the total content of the acid of feature (ii), the alkali metal salt of the acid, and the alkaline earth metal salt of the acid is 1×10^{-8} to 2×10^{-5} mole relative to 1 gram of the cellulose acetate.

10. (thrice amended) A cellulose acetate compound according to Claim 9, wherein the total content of the acid of feature (ii), the alkali metal salt of the acid, and the alkaline earth metal salt of the acid is 1×10^{-7} to 1×10^{-5} mole relative to 1 gram of the cellulose acetate.

13. (twice amended) A cellulose acetate compound according to Claim 1, wherein the average degree of acetylation is from 43.7 to 62.5%.

15. (twice amended) A cellulose acetate compound according to Claim 1, wherein the cellulose as a raw material is at least one member selected from the group consisting of a wood pulp and a linter pulp.

~~Subt
H7~~
16. (thrice amended) A cellulose acetate compound according to Claim 15, wherein the cellulose as a raw material is at least one member selected from the group consisting of a hardwood pulp and a softwood pulp.

~~Subt
H7~~
17. (thrice amended) A method of producing a cellulose acetate compound claimed in Claim 1, which comprises:
(i) mixing a cellulose acetate, and an acid having an acid dissociation exponent pK_a of 1.93 to 4.50 in water or the metal salt thereof, to give a slurry pH of 4.5 to 6.0;

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(ii) treating a cellulose acetate with said acid or said metal salt thereof to give a slurry pH of 4.5 to 6.0; or

(iii) adding an alkali metal salt of said acid or an alkaline earth metal salt of said acid to a cellulose acetate, such that the total content of said alkali metal and said alkaline earth metal in 1 gram of the cellulose acetate is 5.5×10^{-6} equivalent or less in terms of ion equivalent, to give a slurry pH of 4.5 to 6.0.

~~Subt
H10~~
22. (amended) A method of producing a cellulose acetate compound which comprises treating a cellulose with acetic acid, acetylating with a reactant consisting essentially of acetic anhydride in the presence of a sulfuric acid catalyst to produce a cellulose triacetate, and hydrolyzing or aging the cellulose triacetate using sulfuric acid as a catalyst.

G 12 Subt H3
11. (twice amended) A cellulose acetate composition comprising the cellulose acetate compound of Claim 1 in the form of a slurry, wherein the slurry has a pH of 4.5 to 5.5.

G 15 Subt H4
12. (thrice amended) A cellulose acetate composition according to Claim 11, wherein the slurry has a pH of 4.8 to 6.0.

G 12 Subt H8
18. (amended) A dope containing the cellulose acetate compound according to Claim 1.

G 13 Subt I
20. (~~twice~~ ^{thrice} amended) A method for improving the releasability of a film from a support which comprises casting the dope of Claim 18 on the support.

REMARKS

Examiners Everett White and Gary Geist are cordially thanked for the courtesies extended to Applicants' representative during a personal interview on January 17, 2002. The substance of the interview is reflected in the following Remarks.

This is in response to the Office Action that was mailed on June 21, 2000. The recitation "to generate free carboxyl groups" has been removed